

Roger J. Cirella

11 Larovera Terrace

Ansonia, CT 06401

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Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee

Good afternoon, Senator Looney, Representative Janowski and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Roger Cirella and I am pleased to appear before you today as a nominee for the Metro North New Haven Rail Commuter Council. I am a Litigation Paralegal for a Chemical Company in East Norwalk. I live in Ansonia with my wife, Carrie of eight (8) years along with our daughter, Amelia who is five and our son, Andrew who is 1.5. We moved to Ansonia in 2001.

Prior to my employment in East Norwalk in December, 2005, I drove to Hartford, CT from Ansonia beginning in January, 2002 and I worked for a law firm on Asylum Avenue. After three (3) years of driving and having to retire one (1) 1994 Ford Escort after a 180,000 miles, I looked for an easier way to commute to Hartford. There wasn't a bus service available or a rail service for me to arrive before 9am. Amtrak offered a shuttle service from New Haven that arrived in Hartford for 9:22am. I managed to convince the managing partners of the law firm I worked at to let me start at 9:30am. That worked for a while but there were many delays especially on the return trip to New Haven. Amtrak is an interstate service not an intrastate one. I didn't understand why Metro-north didn't provide service from Waterbury or New Haven. After all, Routes 91 and 84 were extremely congested everyday and that was in good weather.

Fortunately, I acquired a job in East Norwalk in December, 2005. I knew there was a railroad station in my home city but the reputation of the Waterbury Line was unreliable and offered little

service. I drove to Bridgeport for all of 2006 and picked up the train there because the mainline provided more service from Bridgeport and on the return trip from East Norwalk. Traveling down Route 8 everyday proved frustrating especially when the Waterbury train arrived the same time I did in Bridgeport when it was running. So I started taking the train from Ansonia everyday in January, 2007. Bus Service was a routine occurrence. I would send emails to Metro-north and complain to the conductors when one conductor told me to go to the meetings. He was referring to the Connecticut Commuter Council (Council) meetings. I started to attend the monthly meetings in March, 2007. At the first meeting, everyone looked at me as if I were from another planet when I mentioned the Waterbury Line (Line). Quickly I realized that commuters from the Naugatuck Valley gave up on the Line long ago.

With the guidance of the Council, I (with two hundred and fifty interested riders from a petition I collected) persuaded Metro-north and the CT DOT to add a third rail car, another afternoon train for the return trip to Waterbury, and then in the Spring of 2008 an earlier train from Waterbury. There is still a lot of work to be done and as a member of the Council I know I can help the rail commuters obtain much needed service.

The future of transportation in Connecticut including freight service is the railroad. The Obama administration talks of reducing our reliance on foreign oil and our own individual carbon footprint. Why not leave your car or bicycle at the train station and do your part for a healthier environment for my children and yours? I enjoy helping the commuters. After all, we are all trying to make a living and get to and from work as quickly as possible so we can all spend time with our families. I intend on taking the Amtrak shuttle to Hartford for the meeting with the Committee. Please ask me about my commute.